pontiac state hospital

old and new

The Pontiac State Hospital

Old and New

In the past two generations tremendous advancements have been made. However, not to the same degree in all things. Often we take this development for granted until we see the old next to its latest counterpart. Or, if we do, we think this development is only in things not in ideas and attitudes on certain things. For example: ILLNESS: These days we hear so much about cancer, heart trouble, and mental illness, that one wonders if people are not getting sicker, if so, where is this progress?

Intelligence tells us that this is not so! Then why this talk? This talk is aimed at making us progressive about illness and health. Do you recall the "hush-hush" and disgrace about tuberculosis and other illnesses in the not so distant past? Unfortunately, there are still many people with these ideas about sickness, particularly mental illness in the family or friends. Granted that shame and ignorance is overcome and at last we discuss mental illness openly and intelligently, then one question, what has been done in the past two generations to warrant this understanding and discussion?

Before we look at the progress made, let's get some up-to-date information regarding mental illness. Mental illness is no different than any other illness that hasn't yet been overcome. There are as many beds filled with people with physical illness as there are with mental illness. Mental illness is as varied in kinds and degrees as physical illness. Treatment for mentally ill patients parallel that of the physically ill, being of both short and long duration. It also follows that the quicker medical attention is given the greater the chance for recovery in either physical or mental illness.

It should be noted that so far there has been no reference to "insanity". Insanity is a legal term used by the courts to indicate that a person is considered legally incompetent because of the degree of his mental illness. There is the same reasoning here as there is for hospitalizing the tubercular; i.e., for the protection of the patient and society.

Reviewing the progress made since the days of the horse and buggy asylum with its limited facilities, to the present day modern mental hospitals could fill volumes. To be brief, the following shows the tremendous strides that have been accomplished in a relatively short time. The first asylums had small professional staffs with limited knowledge; poor working facilities; guarded attitudes toward the mentally ill, and little else. From this antiquated mental program has evolved today's modern hospitals. They have been blessed with increased professional staff; highly developed treatment, training and research programs; broad expanding facilities and new attitudes toward the mentally ill. But by far, the most important aspect is that they are still growing, still learning, and profiting by these endeavors.

THE ASYLUM

The Eastern Michigan Asylum was authorized by the Michigan Legislature in 1873. In August 1878 the asylum was opened for two hundred and twenty-two patients. Doctor Henry M. Hurd was the first Medical Superintendent. It was

the second state mental institution in Michigan and served twenty counties in Southeastern Michigan. ". . . The strictest economy was necessary in providing for the patients, and many temporary fixtures were used. The furniture for the wards, the administration building, and the Chapel was much reduced in quality and quantity. The buildings were ungraded and were without ornamental trees or shrubbery. . . ."

By 1882 there had been increased construction in the physical plan of the institution but they were unable to keep up with the ever increasing demands of new admissions. Originally the hospital occupied more than three hundred acres, two hundred of which were donated by interested citizens of Pontiac. Additional land has been added from time to time to keep pace with the extensive agriculture, dairy, and the cattle breeding projects for which the hospital became famous, and also in keeping with the practices of that date.

EARLY CARE AND TREATMENT

Due to the limited professional and general knowledge regarding mental illness, and the inadequate financial support of the State Legislature, treatment for its mentally ill was mostly custodial care.

Two years after opening, after exhausting all available space, the asylum was forced to refuse further admissions. Beds had been moved into day rooms and women patients were living in an attic. The patient's living quarters were crudely furnished, the patient's time unorganized and there

was no special provision for his care at night. If the patient became disturbed, mechanical restraints were used. Recreation consisted of being herded into courts for "an airing" and left without supervision to amuse themselves as best they could.

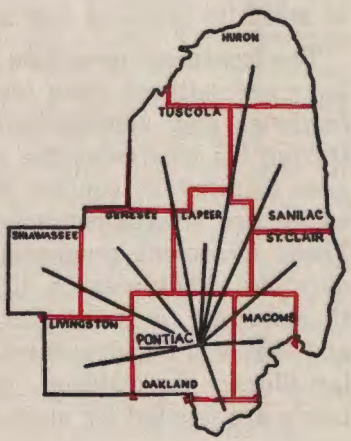
Under the astute direction of Doctor Hurd, who studied the mental hospitals in England and various other parts of the world, there was initiated during the next decade, an Occupational or Work Therapy Program. Men worked in the barns, farmed, and gardened; women sewed and did domestic tasks. Recreation consisted of social gatherings, card parties, dances, fairs, dramatic and concert entertainments. In conjunction with the above a special effort was directed toward improving the physical and mental lot of the patients. A gynecologist and pathologist were added to the Staff on an honorary basis. Research into the pathology of insanity and nervous diseases were also instigated, medical facilities were expanded to include two infirmary wards, additional operating rooms, a ward for contagious and tubercular patients and an autopsy room. An attendant's training program was established, the first of its kind in Michigan. So advanced were these innovations that in 1894 the institution received a World's Fair Award for "Evidence of excellent fire protection, detached cottages for each sex, and a training school for attendants". In keeping with these advances, in 1911 the Michigan Legislature changed the institution's name to the Pontiac State Hospital. There were then approximately fifteen hundred patients in a still overcrowded condition and a long waiting list.

The Pontiac State Hospital

The Modern Hospital

The physical aspects of the hospital did not expand with the ever increasing patient population until the 1940's. At that time substantial progress was made in constructing additional accommodations. These consisted of a hospital building for patients needing special attentions, a receiving building for new patients which also houses the Medical and Administrative Departments, and two Geriatric buildings with the latest equipment and treatment facilities. The newest additions to the hospital are a modern and well equipped staff house, residences for physicians and a nurse's home which is at present under construction.

The hospital at present consists of forty-two institutional buildings or a total of eighty-two buildings and occupies four hundred and eighty-five acres of land. Approximately three thousand patients from Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola, Huron, St. Clair, Macomb, Oakland, Genesee, Livingston and Lapeer counties are cared for. Also, three hundred Family Care patients and seven hundred patients on Convalescent Status are receiving service.



MODERN CARE AND TREATMENT

In the 1920's in keeping with the general advancement of Psychiatry and allied professional fields, the function of the hospital gradually changed and evolved into a new, dynamic philosophy which influenced and modified the then existing practices, treatment, ideas and methods. Additional professional staff resulted in an expansion of treatment facilities. In this period a full time dentist was added to the staff; there was an increase in the medical and nursing staff; and, creation

of a Social Service, Psychology, Occupational Therapy and Recreational Therapy Departments. Also, a new Dietetic Department was organized for the scientific planning of balanced and adequate diets; the modernization of the kitchen and the beautifying of the dining halls.

Under the leadership of Doctor P. V. Wagley, who succeeded Doctor Christian in 1935, the hospital began a period of transition from being mainly a custodial institution which had been financially self-sufficient due to agricultural pursuits to the present modern treatment hospital.

Pontiac State Hospital in the past decade has become highly organized for In-Patient, Out-Patient, Psychiatric, Medical, Social, Psychological, and Rehabilitative Service. Its aims are to provide the patients with treatment programs and services, and the use of modern facilities under professional direction to meet its physical and mental needs.

The treatment programs for the in-patients and out-patients have necessitated close team work between the various professional and administrative departments in the hospital. During his treatment the patient is to a greater or lesser degree in constant contact with members of this team, all of whom are always concerned with his welfare and recovery. These treatment programs are varied in type, direction and duration. They may be direct and active or indirect and continuous. All forms of therapy are used as deemed necessary and that will be advantageous for the patient and his particular illness. In addition, the patient's physical and medical needs are treated by medical specialists, consultants and surgeons.

In the modern treatment of mental illness there is included an atmosphere and activities which are similar to the patient's own community. The hospital provides such facilities as a general store, barber and beauty shop, movies, radio and television, library, orchestras, bands and choirs, plus recreational outlets and avocational hobbies; also, various jobs of maintenance in the institution. All hospital facilities are geared toward the good of the individual patient.

The Clinical Director, under the general direction of the Medical Superintendent, is particularly responsible for the

coordination of the entire therapeutic activities all of which are directed toward the rehabilitation of the patient. With the new dynamic understanding of the individual and his emotional problems, it has been necessary to provide constant and progressive training of the Medical Staff in the understanding of personality development. Out of this need arose a training program for psychiatrists. The Medical Staff is primarily responsible for the supervision of treatment programs in the hospital and the administration of various types of therapy. Individual psychotherapy, group therapy and electro shock therapy are a few of these activities.

The Social Service Department not only functions within the hospital but is also responsible for handling the out-patient treatment programs. In conjunction with the Medical Staff, Social Workers provide individual and group therapy programs and render various social services for patients and their families, administer and supervise the Family Care program and work closely with the patients who are on Convalescent Status. One aspect of the work of the Social Service Department geared toward helping patients on Convalescent Status is an industrial placement program. This program is of utmost value to the community and an important aspect of prevention as well as a patient service. The group therapies conducted by the Social Service Department are also geared toward prevention and toward the needs of the community as well as toward the needs of the patient. Since 1948 Psychodrama sessions have been in progress. In Psychodrama there is an impromptu acting-out of inter-personal difficulties. These scenes usually develop around the life stories of the participating patients. The Social Service Department also conducts interview group therapy sessions for the benefit of the relatives of patients. These sessions are also open to anyone in the community who is interested in learning about mental health and mental illness. A training program for students from the University of Michigan and Wayne University graduate Schools of Social Service is also maintained.

The Psychology Department is an integral part of the professional team; working closely with the Medical Staff to provide diagnostic information profiles and studies on personality

dynamics, evaluations of therapeutic potentialities, and individual psychotherapy. This Department in conjunction with the local Universities, supervises and maintains a professional graduate training program for students, and a research program.

The registered nurses, trained psychiatric aids and attendants work very closely with the hospital team to help the patient adjust and make use of the various treatment services and facilities, and care for the general health needs of the patient. The Nursing Department also carries on a training program for psychiatric aids, all of whom become certified upon completion of a prescribed course of study.

The Occupational and Recreational Therapy Departments consist of trained therapists and students in training. These departments are concerned with providing specialized instruction and therapy in arts and crafts, and in helping the patient maintain physical fitness through special classes; stimulate interest by music, literature, dancing; and help the patient regain his confidence in dealing with people in groups and in society.

As the community is so important to a mental hospital a volunteer program has within the last six months been established. An intensive course of training has been set up and all volunteers must complete this program before starting to

work with the patients. The training program which is conducted by the Medical Superintendent, Social Service Department, and Recreational Therapy Department, is aimed toward helping the interested participants understand the meaning of mental health, come to know Pontiac State Hospital and have first hand knowledge of what can be done to help the person who is so unfortunate as to become mentally ill. These community minded volunteers render a service to the patients which the employees can never render, and they also gain knowledge which helps them to help others in the community and thus bring about prevention which is the ultimate aim of all of us. Volunteers are important to the hospital, the hospital is important to the community, and the two must work together if we are to have the best for our mentally ill and gradually bring about prevention.

In addition the hospital team includes smaller but equally important departments such as the Dental Clinic, Pharmacy, X-Ray, Registered Pathology Laboratory and Dietetics.

To people living in an institution, food is very important. Mealtime is an anticipated event. Recognizing this, the Pontiac State Hospital attempts to plan and serve meals that are well liked and at the same time nutritionally adequate. The Hospital Diet is based on the recommendations of the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council for a

Food Plan at Moderate Cost; it contains three thousand calories per day and is adequate in protein, minerals and vitamins.

Other departments which are essential to the smooth running of the institution and to good patient care but which do not have immediate contact with the patients, include Personnel, Housekeeping, and the Business Offices. The duties of these important departments are too numerous to mention and without them patient service could not possibly have reached its present high standard.

THE PATIENT IN THE HOSPITAL

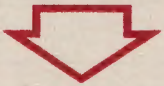
Upon his arrival at the Hospital the new patient is admitted by the Social Service Department, where a brief interview is held to secure pertinent information regarding the patient and his family. As soon as the patient is assigned to an admitting ward, and after receiving immediate nursing and medical care he is seen by the doctor and the social worker who have been assigned to his case. The doctor gives him a complete physical, mental and neurological examination and the social worker explains the hospital procedure and facilities to the patient.

Within two months the patient will be given numerous examinations by doctors and psychologists, a complete social history will have been taken by the social worker and the patient will meet the whole medical staff for the purpose of the patient becoming acquainted with the medical staff and they with him. The patient will have his illness diagnosed and a plan of treatment prescribed for his particular illness. From time to time, following this period, the patient will be presented to the medical staff for the purpose of observation and change in treatment planning. Upon completion of treatment, and when the patient appears ready to return home to his family and community the best feasible plan will be made with the patient, his family and the staff. He may be placed on Convalescent Status for periodic supervision and treatment for three years; or he might be placed on Convalescent Work Status with assistance and close supervision provided until such time as he exhibits his own capabilities; or in Family

Care, a closely supervised boarding placement for patients who are either unable to move directly into the community or who need a protective transition between the hospital and the community.

In this environment of continuous care, the patient is helped to recover his health, to regain a renewed sense of personal worth through self-understanding, and to secure confidence in relationship with his family and friends for his return to his job and community.

Yes, the mentally ill do get well. During the last fiscal year five hundred and forty patients were placed on Convalescent Status, two hundred and twenty were placed in Family Care homes and four hundred and seventy were discharged from the hospital records. Much still remains to be done, the personnel shortage is serious and as a result many patients who could be helped cannot be reached, but as the just mentioned figures show, many patients do get well. It is also true that mentally ill patients have a better chance for recovery than ever before, and his chances for recovery are going to become even better as people like YOU who are community minded continue to show an interest in his welfare. Know your community, know your hospital, continue to do your part in this important work.



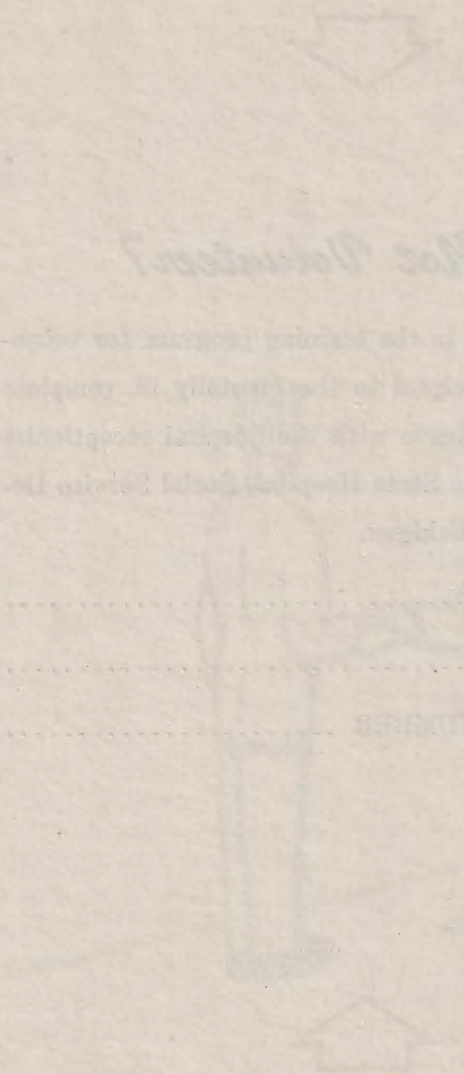
Why Not Volunteer?

If you are interested in the training program for volunteers and in being helpful to the mentally ill, complete the form below and leave with the hospital receptionist or mail to the Pontiac State Hospital, Social Service Department, Pontiac, Michigan.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TELEPHONE NUMBER .....



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